

1.0 BACKGROUND

The Town of Colchester is the 4th largest community in the State of Vermont. Along with Chittenden County as a whole, it has grown rapidly in the last 40 years. With limited community sewage disposal facilities, most residential growth has taken place on sandy soils located north of Winooski, around Malletts Bay, and near Colchester Village. Some local commercial centers have arisen at Heineberg Drive/Warner's Corner, Lakeshore Drive and Colchester Village to serve these pockets of residential development. The extension of a municipal sewer line from Winooski to Interstate 89 Exit 16 has enabled the location of hotels, restaurants, retail and wholesale stores, office buildings and industrial plants in a more regional-serving setting.

1.1 Colchester Master Plan

The 1996 Colchester Master Plan recognized the likelihood that growth pressures would remain high. The Plan described a number of distinct planning areas within the town and their suitability for various forms of development. Some of the areas with higher growth potential included the Town Center along Blakely Road, portions of Malletts Bay, the proposed Route 7/ Circumferential Highway intersection, and Interstate 89 Exit 17. The 1996 Master Plan contained the following description of the Exit 17 area:

1996 Colchester Master Plan Chapter II. Land Use (pp. 19-20)

EXIT 17 - Exit 17 provides a full interchange with I-89, at Rte. 7 and Rte. 2. This is a transportation hub and has been designated by the Town as a growth center. The area within the growth center is sparsely developed, with a few residences and businesses. Municipal water exists within the Rte. 7 right-of-way. There is currently no municipal sewer and soils are generally not suited for on-site disposal. The level of service at the intersection of Routes 2 and 7 is not good but road improvements and signalization are currently underway.

Goal: The exit 17 area is designated as a growth-center and should host significant new development.

Policies and Implementation:

1. A comprehensive development plan should be completed by the Town for the Exit 17 area. The plan should address sewage disposal, traffic, finance, zoning and all other issues necessary to allow for orderly well planned growth at Exit 17.
2. Zone districts should be changed as needed for Exit 17 to reach the full potential of a growth center.
3. The Town should work more closely with the Town of Milton on development of related infrastructure issues.
4. The growth center goals for this area should be considered by the Town in formulating a comprehensive sewage disposal plan, and options for improved sewage disposal capacity should be investigated and pursued.
5. This area is designated as a Growth Center on the Future Land Use Map.

1.2 Wastewater Treatment Planning

The Town very quickly began work on one of these policies, implementation of a comprehensive sewage disposal plan. An engineering report was issued in October 1997 entitled “Town of Colchester Wastewater Master Planning, Part II: Town-Wide Wastewater Facility Planning Update”. Three options were considered for the Exit 17 area: (1) construction of a new wastewater treatment plant on the Lower Lamoille River, (2) connection to an expanded wastewater treatment facility in Milton and (3) construction of a limited central collection system with land-based treatment. The study slightly preferred the first option of a new Lamoille River treatment plant with connection to Milton a close second choice. The third option of land-based treatment was considered to be far less suitable.

In 1998, the Town of Milton was actively pursuing grants and permits for upgrade of its wastewater treatment plant and extension of sewer mains to the Catamount Industrial Park. Both Milton and Colchester considered the possibility of extending sewer a short distance further to the Exit 17 area. Cost-sharing proposals were put forward by both municipalities. The Colchester Community Development Corporation (CCDC), with funding assistance from several private sources, prepared an August 17, 1998 “Chimney Corner Growth Center Study”. This study analyzed land suitability and overall growth potential for the area. CCDC worked actively with individual landowners to identify likely costs of new sewer hookups and to determine an overall package of financial support for the project. Ultimately, Milton and Colchester were not able to agree on a joint funding package for a Catamount/Exit 17 sewer extension. Milton proceeded with its own efforts to extend sewer service to Catamount, but its application for an Act 250 permit was denied. Following the denial, Milton continues its efforts to expand wastewater treatment facilities; but it does not currently plan to allow any extension to serve Exit 17 in Colchester.

1.3 Highway Capacity Planning

Planning activities also have progressed on issues of Exit 17 highway capacity. In 1998, the Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization (CCMPO) identified the need to address transportation issues along the entire Route 7 corridor from Winooski to Georgia. A CCMPO-funded study is now underway that is addressing existing and future land use, highway safety, levels of service on road segments and at intersections, access management, and need for highway widening and other improvements. That study will make specific recommendations for Interstate 89 Exit 17, for the nearby intersection of Routes 2 and 7, and for access in the immediate vicinity.

In a separate effort, the Vermont Agency of Transportation is seeking a location for an improved park-and-ride facility at Exit 17.

1.4 Land Use Planning

The Town of Colchester Planning Commission sought funding in 1999 under the State Municipal Planning Program to develop a Growth Center Plan for the Interstate 89 Exit 17 interchange area. The Vermont Department of Housing & Community Affairs was eager to fund this project because of its own interest in improving land use planning at interstate interchanges. A draft 1998 “Vermont Interstate Highway Interchange Development Policy” contained the following objectives:

1. Maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact villages and urban centers surrounded by rural countryside,
2. Encourage a strong and diverse economy that provides rewarding job opportunities and maintains high environmental standards,
3. Protect the historic, scenic or natural values around the exits,
4. Preserve the public investment in a safe and efficient transportation system,
5. Respect and encourage private property investment and stewardship, and
6. Be coordinated with municipal and regional plans and policies.

Work began on the Exit 17 Growth Center Plan in mid-1999 under the direction of the Colchester Planning Commission. Planning considerations have included the goals and objectives of the 1996 Colchester Master Plan, input from the Town of Milton regarding land use policy and the potential for sewer connection, on-going highway capacity studies, the interchange policy of the State of Vermont, concerns of individual property owners in the Exit 17 area, and comments from other Colchester residents.

Concurrently, the role of Exit 17 as a growth center is being considered as part of the update of the Chittenden County Regional Plan. Available designations under the regional plan are a sub-regional growth center, a local growth center, or not to be included as a growth center.

2.0 EXISTING CONDITIONS

The study area is located adjacent to US Routes 2 & 7 and Interstate 89 Exit 17 at the northern end of Colchester, Vermont. The area is designated as a growth center in the 1996 Colchester Master Plan. In the 1996 Chittenden County Regional Plan, it is designated as a local growth center. The area of the existing Growth Center is approximately 822 acres. A base map of the Exit 17 Study Area (Map 1) depicts roads, parcel boundaries, structures, wood lines, and 10 foot contour lines.

2.1 Zoning

Map 2 depicts existing zoning districts for the Exit 17 study area. Districts within the Growth Center are General Development 1 (GD1), Commercial (COMM), Industrial (I), Low Density Residential (R1) and Rural Residential (RR). The centrally located GD1 District allows for residential and multi-family residential development, commercial and service businesses, and planned unit or planned residential development (PUD/PRD). Multi-family dwellings can have a maximum density of four units per acre and are subject to review under town subdivision and PRD regulations. A variety of commercial and industrial uses are permitted in the COMM and I districts. Residential districts, either R1 or RR, are located primarily at the perimeter of the Growth Center.

Generally, zoning district boundaries are compatible with the growth center boundary. However, one discrepancy exists in the portion of the district east of Route 7. While Allen Brook, parallel to Route 7, serves as the growth center boundary from the 1996 Master Plan; the remaining portions of two large parcels located east of Allen Brook were rezoned to GD1 in 1997.

2.2 Natural Resources

In general, the area has a moderate level of environmental constraints that may impact conceptual design and site development. Approximately 185 acres (23%) of the existing Growth Center have some level of restriction (slopes in excess of 25%, wetlands with 50' buffers, and streams with 85' buffers from centerline). These conditions are depicted on Map 3.

.1 Topography

Site contours, as developed using USGS digital elevation data, show a minimum level of 100 feet and a maximum height of 420 feet. Moving west to east across the southern portion of the property, the ground surface initially rises to its highest point, drops off to a low point and then rises again to the Interstate right-of-way. The northern portion of the Growth Center is generally flatter, with a slight rise from east to west.

Slopes across the study area range from approximately 5% to 35%. The steepest areas are located at the western edge of the Growth Center near the highest point of land. This area is currently wooded. The northern portion of the study area is less steep with slopes of approximately 5% to 15%.

.2 Soils / Geology

The soils within the study area are generally silty with Farmington and Munson soil types (soils which are generally not suitable for wastewater disposal systems) comprising the majority of the property. Some of the soils are classified as extremely rocky, occurring near the high point of land located along Routes 2 & 7. This location most likely contains a bedrock outcropping topped with a fine veneer of rocky silt.

A few of the soils identified in the study area are indicated as Prime Agricultural soils by the State of Vermont. Many large areas, however, are noted as “Statewide” soils. Both “Prime” and “Statewide” soils are mapped as “Primary Agricultural Soils” on Map 3. These soils can be considered to be prime agricultural if the land has the capability or the history of agricultural use. Some of the “Statewide” soils on this site would probably be exempt from this determination because of the likelihood for bedrock outcrops that can make the soils useless for farming. An onsite determination would be necessary to quantify these conditions.

Several soils units are indicated as being hydric, or more likely to have a wet consistency and a greater possibility to support wetland species. These soils generally occur at low points of land along Allen Brook and other existing streams.

Conventional on-site septic suitability is poor for these soils. A few areas located along Routes 2 & 7 have favorable soils (Adams soils) and could support a conventional system. A mound or unconventional system could be supported by other soils in the study area. Many of the soils, however, have a shallow depth to groundwater that reduces their ability to function for onsite septic. Possible new rules from the ANR will make innovative treatment options available for sites like this, providing adequate onsite sewage treatment. Overall, approximately 315 acres or 38% of the soils within the Growth Center could support some type of on-site septic system. Within this total, only 89 acres or 11% of the Growth Center has soils which are favorable to conventional on-site systems.

.3 Wetlands

Several Class I or II wetlands are indicated in and around the study area. The largest wetland of these types is the Malletts Creek wetland system located south of the Growth Center. The presence of hydric soils in the study area would suggest many Class III wetlands. A field determination of wetlands would be required for locating these Class III wetlands.

.4 Surface Waters

Allen Brook forms the eastern edge of the existing Growth Center and is located at the base of a steep ravine. Another, small drainage course moves southward from US Route 2 to the north along the western edge of the Rubman property, eventually connecting to Malletts Creek and its associated wetland system. Aerial photographs of the study area also indicate a possible seasonal drainage within the low point of

land near the southern property boundary. This area may be within the 100' floodplain of Malletts Creek. Several other small drainage courses move southward from the interior of the study area, generally towards Malletts Bay. One moves south between the two large hills near the Velco ROW. The Town recently enacted an 85 foot buffer strip from the centerline of streams to protect streambanks.

.5 Endangered Species

A review of the Vermont Nongame and Natural Heritage Program database does not indicate the presence of any rare, threatened or endangered species within the study area. The nearest occurrence of any of these species is located to the south in the Malletts Creek area. This area has bird, fish, animal and plant species listed within the database.

.6 Natural Communities / Vegetation

The study area appears to be generally rolling meadow with a mix of grasses and successional plant species. The larger wooded area consist mostly of conifers (pine) and is located in the central and southern portions of the Growth Center. The Malletts Creek area to the south is listed by the State of Vermont Agency of Natural Resources as a Natural Community and is also specifically mentioned in the 1996 Colchester Master Plan.

.7 Toxic Wastes

No hazardous waste or pollution sources are indicated within the study area as determined from ANR records. Potential contaminant sources include the two gas stations on the corner of US Route 2 and 7 and the equipment dealer located on Jasper Mine Road off Route 2. Using topography as a guide, the groundwater flows would predominantly move towards Allen Brook to the east or Malletts Bay to the south.

2.3 Site Access

Three major highways, US Routes 2 and 7 and Interstate 89, provide access to and through the Growth Center.

.1 Roads

The study area is bisected by Interstate 89 moving north-south. Two ramps, one northbound and one southbound, provide access to and from the Interstate at Interchange 17. US Routes 2 and 7 are shared along the eastern edge of the Growth Center south of Chimney Corners. US Route 2 continues westward bisecting the Growth Center into a northern and southern component. US Route 7 continues northward along the eastern edge of the Growth Center to the Milton Town Line. Jasper Mine Road parallels US Route 2 in an east-west direction. Several other residential roads also exist within the Growth Center.

Average Daily Traffic (ADT) Volumes are provided by the Vermont Agency of Transportation for the following major roadway segments in year 1996:

Interstate 89 south of Exit 17	-	24,500	vehicles per day
Interstate 89 north of Exit 17	-	17,600	“ “
US Route 2 east of I89	-	13,800	“ “
US Route 2 west of I89	-	12,500	“ “
US Route 7 south of Chimney Corners	-	9,700	“ “
US Route 7 north of Chimney Corners	-	7,700	“ “

With normal background growth, traffic volumes are projected to increase by 30% through year 2008. However, major traffic generators such as the Husky plant in Milton are likely to cause traffic growth above base levels. A study for that project estimated increases of 43% to 55% for Colchester portions of US Route 7 in year 2008.

Even with relatively moderate existing traffic volumes, significant delays are now occurring at both Exit 17 ramps. Intersection delays in the AM and PM peak hours are in the level of service F range (“extremely long delays”). The US2/US7 intersection (Chimney Corners) is now operating at a more acceptable level of service C (“modest delays”), but level of service will decline with traffic increases such as those estimated above.

Roadway and intersection improvements for these locations are now being analyzed as part of the Route 7 Corridor Study under the direction of the Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization. Major upgrades may be necessary at the Exit 17 ramps, and federal funding would be required for any such work. Other likely improvements are additional turning lanes at the US2/US7 intersection and roadway widening on US2 from its intersection with US7 to a point west of both Exit 17 ramps. Unless major development occurs in the area, roadway widening on US7 is less likely and may only involve turning lanes at intersections. A portion of funding for roadway improvements, other than those at Interstate 89, may have to come from local sources.

.2 Bike Paths and Pedestrian Access

The 1996 Colchester Master Plan proposes class II bike paths along the entire length of US Routes 2 and 7 in the vicinity of the Growth Center. These paths would connect with an already designated bike route leading to the Champlain Islands. Pavement widening is needed to accommodate the necessary width for shoulders to serve bicyclists.

Sidewalks do not currently exist in the vicinity of the Growth Center. New sidewalks should be planned in connection with proposed development in the area.

With the proposed development of the Niquette Bay State Park on Malletts Bay just southwest of the Growth Center, bicycle and/or pedestrian access should be provided. A class I path can be designed to connect with the proposed class II bike path along US Route 2.

.3 Public Transportation / Ride Share

A park and ride parking facility is located within the Growth Center supporting commuter traffic to Burlington. This facility is scheduled to be relocated and expanded within the near future. Current user patterns should be surveyed and levels of service at affected intersections analyzed before a final location for the relocated facility is approved.

No Chittenden County Transportation Authority (CCTA) bus service exists within the area.

2.4 Utility Connections

.1 Sewer

A Wastewater Master Planning study, prepared for the Town of Colchester in 1997, identified three options for providing a wastewater collection system in the Exit 17 area. The preferred option was construction of a new wastewater treatment plant on the lower Lamoille River. However, subsequent review has indicated likely permitting difficulties with this option.

The second option was connection northward to the Town of Milton wastewater collection system. Portions of the Milton system already exist. The Town of Milton was denied a permit in 1999 to extend the system to Catamount Industrial Park near the Colchester town boundary. If this extension had been approved, only a short additional extension would have been needed to serve the Exit 17 Growth Center. However, several parties opposed this extension due to the fear of unplanned growth at Exit 17. The Town of Milton was prepared to agree to a permit condition that would have prevented extension of the wastewater collection system to Colchester.

The least preferred option from the 1997 study was a limited central collection with land-based treatment. This option was considered difficult due to the limited availability of suitable soils and the high costs of this type of system.

A fourth option suggested more recently would require connection in a southerly direction to a wastewater treatment system elsewhere in Colchester. However, given the lengthy distance involved and the recent voter disapproval of a proposed treatment system near Malletts Bay, this option is not likely to be available for many years.

At the present time, connection to a centralized wastewater treatment system is not available. Any development to occur in the Growth Center in the near future must utilize on-site septic capacity.

.2 Water

A Champlain Water District transmission line runs along the entire length of US Route 7 within the Growth Center. Municipal water service is available to serve development in this portion of the study area.

.3 Stormwater

No stormwater collection system exists within the Growth Center. On-site stormwater management would need to be designed in accordance with local and state regulations.

.4 Electric Power

Power within the area is currently provided by Green Mountain Power (GMP). A VELCO transmission line crosses the interstate south of the property. No issues for access to power are anticipated.

.5 Gas

The site is not located in a service area for Vermont Gas Systems, however a gas transmission line appears to move through the Rubman property along a right of way. Connection to this transmission line should be possible.

.6 Telephone

Bell Atlantic provides service within the area. Neighboring commercial and residential customers are currently connected to the phone system. No issues for access to telephone service are anticipated.

2.5 Aesthetic/Visual Considerations

The study area is highly visible from US Routes 2 & 7 and Interstate 89. From the Interstate to the east the ground generally drops downward, while from Routes 2 and 7 it rises. Two basic type of vistas have been discussed and defined:

.1 Important Open Spaces and Vistas

These areas are characterized as having intrinsic scenic quality. Several areas have been mentioned by the Town as important at public meetings and during the Lower Lamoille River Basin Open Space Study public process in the fall of 1998. These areas would most likely be scrutinized very closely under Vermont's Development Control Law, Act 250.

Areas along Interstate 89 that are generally viewed as important are the open meadows on the Coburn & Feeley parcel and the Rubman parcel. The demarcation of the visually significant open area on the Coburn-Feeley parcel is the wooded edge that defines the meadow. The Rubman parcel has a large open meadow moving downward toward I89. The visual break is difficult to define, but most likely includes the hillside.

Other important scenic vistas are found along US Route 2 looking east towards Mount Mansfield and looking south along US Routes 2 & 7.

2 Areas of Potential Visual Impact

These are areas where open lands are very visible, but they do not necessarily contain aesthetic qualities that are characterized as significant. Often, these views are already impacted to some degree by existing development infrastructure. Although these areas need not be protected as scenic vistas, any development that occurs will be readily visible. Care is needed to ensure that the form of any proposed development will not adversely affect its surroundings.

2.6 Historic Considerations

Two historic sites are located within the Growth Center. The remnants of the Wallace House (VT Historic Preservation Site # 0401-12) appear to be located on the southeast corner of the Rubman property. This property should be investigated in more detail. The other site is located across Route 2 and 7 and is the Platt House (#0404-9). No archaeological information was reviewed for this analysis, but the possibility of artifacts exists for portions of the site. Other sites are possible along stream channels within the Growth Center.

2.7 Neighbors

The Growth Center is bordered by Catamount Industrial Park and rural/residential land in the Town of Milton to the north, the O'Brien parcel and rural/agricultural land to the east, Malletts Creek Wetland, the future Niquette Bay State Park and other undeveloped land to the south, and low-density residential areas along Route 2 to the west.

2.8 Site Limitations

Some of the existing conditions described above are likely to limit the location of future development. Mapped wetlands, streams and setbacks, and steep slopes are included as Site Limitations on Map 4. The most important open space vistas also are mapped. Other unmapped conditions that may severely limit development conditions at Exit 17 are unsuitable soils for septic systems, lack of connection to municipal sewer, and highway congestion.

3.0 LAND USE CONCEPTS

In the process of developing a plan for the Exit 17 area, several initial themes or "land use concepts" were considered. The selection of one or more of these concepts was intended to guide the specific details of the development plan. Three land use concepts were mapped - open space orientation (Map 5), village orientation (Map 6), and interstate and industrial orientation (Map 7).

3.1 Open Space Orientation

One concept is that the predominant land use at an interstate interchange should be open space. Some development may be allowed but should not interfere with views for the traveling public. Development that does occur will largely be residential, but some commercial/industrial development may occur at high-volume traffic locations.

The general open space orientation plan depicts large areas of open space along Interstate 89. Most visible meadows are left undeveloped. In one location where a commercial/industrial park already has been approved, a wide buffer of open space is included. Extensive open space also is depicted along Route 7 south of its intersection with Route 2, particularly abutting the Allen Brook ravine.

Commercial development is restricted to two small existing sites near the intersection of Routes 2 and 7. Two blocks of industrial development are provided - one already permitted along Route 7 north of the interchange and a second that is partially developed along Route 2 west of the interchange. Several residential areas are shown at locations far removed from the interchange. It is assumed that residential densities will be fairly low under this plan.

3.2 Village Orientation

The village concept allows much more concentrated development near the interchange. It takes advantage of convenient interstate access; but it focuses primarily on local, not regional development. The predominant land use is residential and may be high-density if a centralized wastewater collection system is provided. One residential area in the eastern portion of the district is very large. It can support a school, recreation center or other use that will complement a large residential neighborhood.

Commercial development is concentrated at a single location - the intersection of Routes 2 and 7. This concentrated area will readily serve nearby residential neighborhoods to the west, east and south. With its location on high traffic-volume roadways, it will also serve drive-by customers from the general vicinity. However, the commercial area is too small to provide a regional role.

Industrial development is fairly limited. Depicted areas are the same as for the open space orientation. One area near the Exit 17 interchange is noted as a possible institutional/vocation center. This type of use, while regional in focus, also is considered to be appropriate for the scale of a village orientation. The same area also could support additional residential or modest industrial/ commercial (not retail) development.

Open space areas are provided at the most important scenic vistas along Interstate 89 and Routes 2 and 7. However, overall open space land is much smaller than in the open space orientation.

3.3 Interstate and Industrial Orientation

The third concept gives very strong recognition to interstate accessibility. This concept assumes that truck-intensive and similar uses belong near an interstate interchange. As a result, a number of developable parcels near the interchange are designated for industrial/warehouse/distribution use.

The concept of interstate accessibility also is used in the designation of a possible regional entertainment site. This type of use is not considered to be compatible with a dense residential area. It will benefit from a more regionally serving site.

Regional commercial development is not a focus of this plan. A few small commercial areas are shown at locations that already are partially developed. Residential development also is fairly limited under this concept and is confined to locations at the perimeter of the district.

Open space areas are similar in size and concept to those in the village orientation.

4.0 SELECTION OF A GROWTH CENTER PLAN

The selected plan for the Exit 17 Growth Center contains elements from several sources. First, the Colchester Planning Commission has determined that the area should continue its long-time designation as a growth center. The initial designation came at a time when planners placed a high level of importance on transportation infrastructure. The Planning Commission feels that this growth factor is still valid. The relative ease of accessibility to the interstate still makes the area desirable for a variety of uses, and some of those uses are better suited to Exit 17 than to other Colchester locations. In contrast, current planning theory in Vermont gives more encouragement to centralized development within or abutting existing settlements. The Planning Commission feels that some elements of concentrated planning can be accomplished at Exit 17, but other areas in Colchester are better suited overall to this form of planning.

The Planning Commission further encourages location of a mix of uses in the Exit 17 Growth Center. Industrial and warehouse uses are appropriate as long as they do not unduly affect the visual qualities of the interchange area. Residential uses already exist throughout the north shore area of Malletts Bay. Similar residential development can take place in the growth center although preferably not in very close proximity to the interchange. Any incompatibilities between abutting industrial and residential uses should be carefully controlled.

The Planning Commission feels that commercial uses at Exit 17 should be limited. Interstate accessibility has led to the location of “big box” stores serving a regional market at several other interchanges in Chittenden County. Colchester planners do not want that form of land use repeated at Exit 17. Limits are placed on the overall area available for retail uses, and standards are proposed for the size and shape of retail buildings. Further restrictions are placed on such high-volume uses as drive-through restaurants and gas stations.

The emerging growth center concept most closely follows the interstate and industrial orientation. However, the limited commercial areas and allowance for residential development contain elements of the village orientation. The growth center plan also attempts to incorporate key parcels of open space, although proposed open spaces are not as extensive as in the open space orientation.

The Planning Commission’s central philosophy for the Exit 17 Growth Center is that extensive development may be allowed, with some notable exceptions; but the form and appearance of development are critical. The growth center plan contains a package of “Use and Design Standards” to control those elements. Key elements include a revised zoning district map; a table of permitted and conditional uses; restricted areas including several key open space parcels; standards for building height, size and setbacks; site details for parking, landscaping, lighting, and signage; building details; and location of access points onto major roadways.

5.0 USE AND DESIGN STANDARDS

5.1 DISTRICTS AND USES

A. Zoning Districts

As shown on Map 8, all existing COM, GD1 and IND districts in the Exit 17 area shall become GD4. A Commercial Overlay district covers a fairly compact area along major roadways and near intersections.

B. Permitted and Conditional Uses

As shown on the enclosed table, a mixture of residential and non-residential uses are proposed for the GD4 district. Generally, high-volume commercial uses, such as retail stores and restaurants, are proposed only within the Commercial Overlay district.

C. Uses with Special Required Conditions

1. Gas sales. The total number of sites in GD4 is limited so as to prevent proliferation of gas sales at an interstate interchange. This limit is due to aesthetic considerations and concern with location of a high traffic generating use in an area already experiencing low levels of service. Specific limits are as follows:

- (a) Existing sites with gas sales may continue or expand.
- (b) New sites may be located only within the Commercial Overlay District.
- (c) New sites must be located within 3,000 feet of the I 89 right-of-way.
- (d) No new site may be developed within 3,000 feet of an existing gas sales use, except that gas sales on opposite sides of I 89 shall not be so limited.

2. Commercial uses within PRD's. Low volume commercial uses serving the neighborhood may be permitted by the Planning Commission in a Planned Residential Development in the GD4 District subject to the conditions listed below:

- (a) Convenience store without gas pumps, not to exceed 3,000 square feet
- (b) Restaurant without drive-in service, not to exceed 3,000 square feet
- (c) Retail stores serving the neighborhood, not to exceed 3,00 square feet
- (d) Dry cleaner, laundromat

These non-residential uses may be permitted as accessory to the residential character of the PRD. There must be a minimum of 75 residential units within the PRD or on abutting parcels within ½ mile of the PRD. The non-residential uses must be accessible to all residential units in the PRD or on abutting parcels via pedestrian facilities such as sidewalks or multi-use paths.

The Planning Commission may approve additional density up to seven units per acre for residential developments that include at least two of the commercial uses listed in this section and that set aside all designated “important open spaces” from Section II(A)3, if any.

3. Retail and Wholesale Uses. The size and extent of retail and wholesale sales shall be limited as follows:
 - (a) No retail/wholesale building shall be greater than 20,000 square feet.
 - (b) Only one retail/wholesale building may be permitted per lot, except in a PUD.
 - (c) Newly subdivided lots for retail/wholesale uses shall have a minimum of 300 feet of frontage on Route 2, Route 7 or Jasper Mine Road.
 - (d) Lot coverage for buildings containing retail/wholesale uses shall not exceed 10% on any existing parcel of 5 acres or greater. This standard shall apply to the overall acreage of that parcel, whether remaining as one lot or subdivided into more than one lot.
4. Nonresidential uses within buildings larger than 10,000 square feet are permitted only in a PUD.

D. Mixed Uses

Due to the potential mix of uses of different characters, such as residential and industrial, performance standards shall be strictly applied.

5.2 LOCATION OF DEVELOPMENT

E. Restricted Areas

1. Setbacks from Major Roadways. Required setbacks for buildings and parking lots shall be as follows:
 - (a) Minimum 100’ from Routes 2, 7 and I 89, except as modified below.
 - (b) Minimum 50’ from Routes 2 and 7 within the Commercial Overlay district.
 - (c) Average 100’ and minimum 50’ from Routes 2 and 7 within a PRD or PUD.

Access drives from a public street to a parking lot are permitted within the setback area. However, maneuvering lanes for internal circulation are subject to the same setback provisions as parking lots.
2. Setbacks from Abutting Residential Districts. Along the perimeter of the GD4 district, a 100’ setback is proposed abutting any residential district. No buildings or parking lots shall be permitted within this setback. Additional

landscaping, screening or other protection of residences from non-residential uses may be required.

3. Protected Open Space. Several important open space areas are depicted on Map 9. These areas are located on three large parcels (Rubman - 120 acres, O'Brien - 185 acres, and Feeley - 90 acres) and one medium-sized parcel (Kelley - 10 acres). They generally represent 15% of each parcel's acreage.

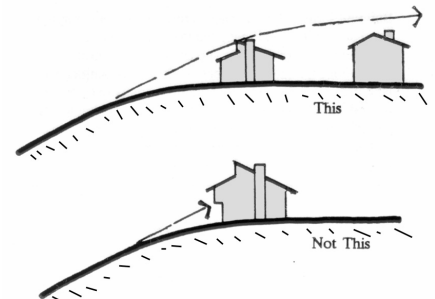
Within the GD4 District, 30% of the parcel's total acreage shall be required as the area to be kept open under subdivision review. The Planning Commission may reduce the required acreage to 25% if no designated "important open space areas" are located on the parcel. The Planning Commission may reduce the required acreage to 20% if the "important open space areas" are included within the acreage to be kept open.

The Planning Commission will approve use of "important open space areas" for septic systems and stormwater treatment systems.

All open spaces to be protected shall be depicted at the time of submission of initial development plans for a property.

F. Building Size/Height and Parking Lots in Relation to Location

1. Within roadway setback - no buildings or parking lot
2. Within 1st 100 ft. from edge of Routes 2 and 7 rights-of-way (where not prohibited due to front yard setback):
 - a) parking lots shall be screened so that parked cars are hidden from view from major roadway
 - b) building height is limited - maximum eave height at 16 feet, maximum ridge height at 30 feet and maximum height for parapets and flat roofs at 22 feet
 - c) strict standards re exterior building appearance - building fronts "broken up" every 50', etc.
3. Beyond 100': Beyond the 100' setback distance, the maximum eave height of any structure shall be 20 feet, the maximum ridge height shall be 34 feet, and the maximum height for parapets and flat roofs shall be 24 feet. However, the Planning Commission may increase these heights according to Section IV(A).
4. Relation to Topography. Review of buildings in relation to existing topography shall be a PUD standard. Buildings shall be encouraged to be "part of", not above the hillside. Buildings shall be placed so as to minimize breaking the skyline when observed from major roadways such as Route 2 and 7.



5. Building Size. Retail buildings - maximum of 20,000 square feet. Other large buildings subject to design standards.

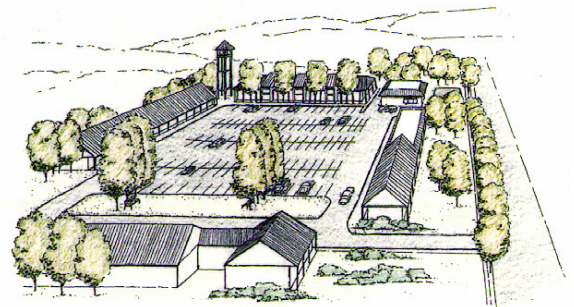
G. Protection from Dissimilar Uses

1. A minimum distance of 50' along with suitable landscaping shall be provided between any adjacent residential and non-residential uses. (NOTE: this restriction does not apply to residential/non-residential combinations within a building or in a "new-urbanism" development form).
2. Any uses generating noise, vibrations, dust, odor or similar disturbance shall demonstrate that such conditions will not exceed acceptable performance standards, as determined by the Planning Commission, at the property boundary of any adjacent residential use.

5.3 SITE DETAILS

A. Parking

1. Siting. Parking is encouraged behind existing structures and away from main highways. If a parking lot is to be placed at the front of a structure, along a main highway, a buffer strip with appropriate landscaping may be required as a screening treatment.
2. Number of spaces. The number of spaces shall be according to use as outlined in the Colchester Zoning Ordinance. However, when alternatives are available - e.g. shared parking among different users or access by public transportation or sidewalks - the Planning Commission may allow provision of fewer spaces.
3. Bicycles. Bicycle racks shall be provided for all projects with at least 50 vehicle parking spaces.



BUILDINGS CONTAIN A COURTYARD PARKING LOT REDUCING ITS APPARENT SCALE.

B. Landscaping

1. Existing Vegetation.
 - a) Retention: Applicants shall be encouraged to protect mature trees, hedgerows and woodlots, and use such features as design elements in site plans.

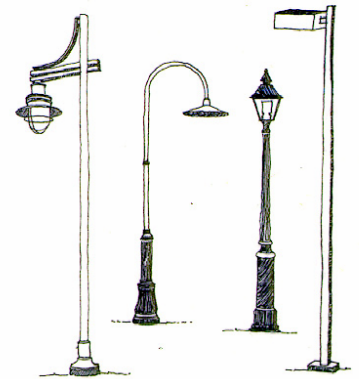
- b) Protection: Methods for protecting large caliper trees (over 8”) from damage during construction shall be outlined by the applicant.
 - c) Relocation: Applicants are encouraged to relocate large caliper trees using appropriate methods whenever feasible.
2. Transitions. Between different land uses, landscaping shall be established to reduce visual impacts, reduce noise levels, improve air quality and provide greater privacy. The size or scale of the landscaping will correspond to the type of land use. Some guidelines are as follows:

Transitions between different Land Uses		
Site Land Use	Adjacent Land Use	Planting Pattern
Residential	Open Space/ Agricultural	Pattern of open spaces and woodlands of native species arranged in a soft and transitional form. No minimum necessary as long as goals are met.
Residential	Residential	Existing vegetation and new plantings shall be used to provide a buffer between abutting rear yards.
Residential	Commercial	A more densely arranged buffer of at least 50’ including a combination of deciduous and coniferous species. For high traffic generators, berms may be required for noise abatement.
Residential	Industrial	<p>A berm 7' high or greater as needed to screen loading docks and other industrial operations. Such a berm shall include evergreen plantings of sufficient density to screen for noise and visual impacts.</p> <p>If industrial uses are setback at least 75’ from a residential boundary or if changes in topography provide sufficient relief, the Planning Commission may allow a densely arranged landscaped buffer at least 50’ wide in place of a berm.</p>

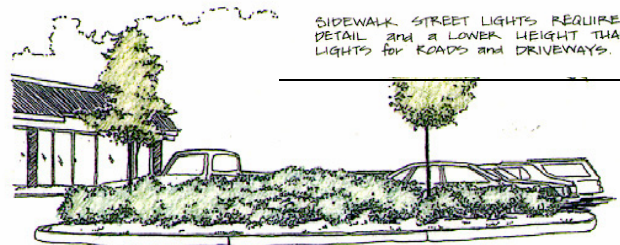
3. Parking Lots: Large, paved parking lots shall be broken up by planted islands containing trees and/or native shrubs. Moderately sized tree species tolerant of urban conditions, such as linden, ash, Norway maple, etc. shall be used within parking areas. Landscaped berms are encouraged to screen parking lots from view along Routes 2 and 7 and Interstate 89. Parking for industrial uses need not be broken up if the area is not visible from Route 2, 7 and I 89 or existing residential developments.
4. Street Trees: Street trees are encouraged along major roadways and access lanes at a spacing of 30' on-center. Trees shall be tolerant of urban conditions, and planted between pedestrian walkways and road edges to provide visual separation between vehicular and pedestrian uses.

C. Lighting

1. Fixtures. Applicants are encouraged to use high-quality, sharp cut-off, metal halide fixtures.
2. Mounting Heights. Parking lot lights shall be no higher than 16 feet from parking lot surface to the fixture. The Planning Commission may increase the height to 20 feet if it determines that footcandles will be reduced or the overall aesthetics of the lighting plan will be improved. Pedestrian-scaled lights for walkways and sidewalks shall be less than 12 feet in height. Angled building-mounted lights shall be discouraged.
3. Style. Fixtures shall complement the building materials and architectural style. Pedestrian-scaled lights shall have more detail than access or parking area lighting.
4. Wattage. Applicants shall use the lowest possible wattages.
5. Parking Areas. Adequate exterior lighting levels shall be maintained throughout the parking area. Areas of extreme high or low lighting levels within parking areas shall be avoided. The illumination of the parking field shall not spill out of the project site. Applicants are encouraged to place poles within landscaped islands within parking areas so that



SIDEWALK STREET LIGHTS REQUIRE MORE DETAIL and a LOWER HEIGHT THAN LIGHTS FOR ROADS and DRIVEWAYS.



PLANTING ISLANDS WITH SHRUBS as well as TREES SCREEN CARS and REDUCE the APPARENT SCALE of a PARKING LOT.

bases of poles are not subject to damage due to plowing and lot maintenance.

6. Driveways. Bollards are preferable to poles to delineate entrances along roadways.
7. Roads. Access and collector roads shall be illuminated to adequate levels. Spacing of lights shall provide even lighting over the course of the roadway. Poles spaced too closely together result in “hot spots” while poles placed too far apart will result in a “pulsation” of high and low illumination. These can pose serious issues related to driver safety.
8. Illumination. Lighting levels along roadways and within parking areas shall **at a maximum** use the established guidelines set for in the Chittenden County Lighting Manual, prepared by the Chittenden Regional Planning Commission. Applicants may be required to use lower levels of illumination.

Normal lighting levels shall be permitted during the hours that a business or use is open. Lighting for parking areas and businesses shall be reduced to levels needed for security after normal business hours. Motion detectors are recommended to reduce lighting usage.

9. Public Spaces. Pedestrian walkways, plazas and other outdoor public spaces shall provide pedestrian-scaled lighting to provide safe use at night.

B. Signage

1. All initial requests for signage shall be subject to review and approval by the Planning Commission. All subsequent reviews may be handled by Staff. The standards in this section represent the **maximum** signage that the Planning Commission may approve.
2. Size: Signage is measured as the area encompassing the outer limits of all lettering, graphics or logos plus the greater of (a) an additional 10% of the calculated area or (b) the area of any material or color which is used to differentiate the lettered or graphic portion of the sign from the background on which it is mounted.
3. Types: The following types of permanent signs are permitted subject to the following guidelines.
 - a) Freestanding / Directory Signs
 - b) Building or Wall-Mounted Signs
 - c) Awning or Canopy Signs
 - d) Window or Door Signs
 - e) Service Station Signs
 - f) Internal Directional Signs

4. Signage Guidelines:

Signage Guidelines					
TYPE	NUMBER	SIZE	SETBACK	HEIGHT	PLACEMENT
A Freestanding or Directory Sign - based on the entire lot or complex					
a) Freestanding or Directory Sign	1 per lot or complex	32 s.f.	10' from property line or R.O.W.	Maximum height of 10 feet. Ratio of height/width shall not exceed 5:1	At entry within project limits.
B Building Signs - based on the size of the building					
b) Building or Wall-Mounted Signs	1 per individual tenant entrance If building has more than 3 tenants, maximum of 1 each	0.75 s.f. per 1 linear foot of frontage to major road. 0.5 s.f. per 1 linear foot on secondary façade for corner lots.	NA	Lettering not to exceed 12".	Signs shall be placed along a unified sign band on the building or wall. Signage allowance can be divided amongst tenants Signs must not go above parapet or roofline.
c) Awning or Canopy Signs	NA	NA	NA	Must fit entirely within or on canopy or awning.	Signs shall be placed on the awning or canopy
d) Window and Door Signs	NA	25% of glassed area of storefront.	NA	NA	Signs shall be placed on the glassed area.
The combination of all building signs in this section shall not exceed the maximum as determined for building or wall-mounted signs (category b). If a freestanding or directory sign is approved for the lot or complex, the maximum size for all building or wall-mounted signs shall be reduced by 10%.					
C Special Category Signs					
e) Service Station Signs	1 freestanding plus building mounted signs	As per guidelines	As per guidelines	As per guidelines	Gas prices are included in freestanding sign area. Must not exceed 20% of sign area. No canopy signs are allowed.
f) Internal Directional Signs	As required	2 s.f. maximum	NA	Maximum mounting height of 5'. Lettering not exceeding 6"	As required for directional guidance. No advertisement is permitted.

4. Design:

Appearance:

Signs shall be designed as part of the overall architectural concept and may be incidental or integral to the sign itself. The design and materials used for a sign shall be compatible with the character of the area in which it is located. Total sign heights shall include all architectural elements of the sign itself including pediments, caps and transoms. The structure supporting the sign shall not be more than twice the width of the sign itself. Landscaping at the base of the sign is not subject to this restriction.



WIDE SIDEWALKS ANIMATED BY STOREFRONT WINDOWS, DOORS AND AWNINGS ATTRACT PEDESTRIANS.

Mounted signs shall be placed at a consistent distance away from the building. This helps to animate the space above the pedestrian environment and provide a visual ceiling to the sidewalk.

Lighting:

Signs must be designed to eliminate glare or light overspill. Externally lit signs must have shielded light sources without exposed bulbs. Shielding may be accomplished through architectural design, landscaping or fixture design.

Internally illuminated signs, flashing, animated neon lighting or varying intensity lights shall not be permitted. Light sources may include neon (as a non-principal component of a sign), metal halide or fluorescent. Maximum wattage shall not exceed 150 watts or its equivalent.

Signs shall not be illuminated during non-business hours.



SIGNS PROJECTING CONSISTENTLY FROM BUILDINGS ANIMATE THE SPACE ABOVE PEDESTRIANS AND DELINEATE A SIDEWALK CEILING.

Lettering:

Signs shall be designed with maximum contrast between lettering and backgrounds to ensure visibility. The font and proportions of the lettering shall be balanced so that the letter does not appear stretched or distorted.

5.4 BUILDING DETAILS

A. Height

Building heights are limited within the first 100 feet from the edge of the Routes 2 and 7 rights-of-way according to the standards of Section II(B)(2). Beyond 100 feet, the standards from Section II(B)(3) apply except that the Planning Commission will increase height limits for buildings that are:

- (a) effectively hidden from view by other buildings, trees or natural barriers,
- (b) sited in locations below the adjacent major road levels, and/or
- (c) designed with use of architectural features, color and landscaping to appear in character with Vermont's rural scenery.

The extent of the increased building height shall be as determined by the Planning Commission to ensure that the above objectives are met. The Commission may not approve buildings in excess of the functional limit of current fire equipment used by the Colchester Center Fire Department (which shall not be less than fifty feet). The maximum permitted height within the Growth Center shall not exceed 5 stories as this is the limit of current fire fighting equipment used by the Colchester Fire Department. Consideration shall be made for buildings placed within hillsides and at low points of land relative to major access roads.

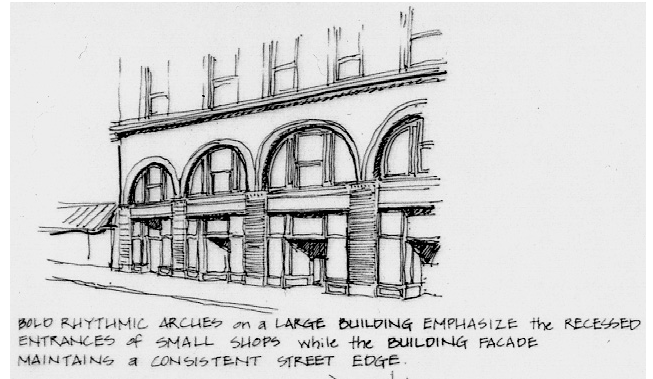
B. Massing

1. Retail Buildings. At approximately 50' intervals along each "front" of a retail building, the facade shall step backward or forward relative to the viewer. The distance of the offset shall be significant enough to give the appearance of a series of interconnected structures. In lieu of physical offsets, the use of banding, changes in materials, trims and cornices are encouraged. Large rectangular forms are not acceptable. Abrupt changes in building heights are to be avoided. Buildings shall transition and step up or down as necessary to achieve a sense of balance. This helps assure that the vertical mass of the buildings is in character with the other structures around it as well as with the topography of the site.
2. Non-retail Buildings. Rectangular forms may be acceptable subject to other review criteria. Applicants are encouraged to use more traditional forms which "break up" these rectangular forms.

C. Facades

The visible portion of buildings from major roadways shall be given special detailing and architectural consideration. Other facades shall also reflect the reasonable use of appropriate building materials and colors so as to avoid a high degree of architectural contrast or the appearance of being unfinished.

Facades shall build upward from the ground with defined bases, middles and tops. The use of cornices and trims provide visual separation between layers and help both to terminate the structure vertically as well as bridge several connected buildings together.



Only the facades of industrial buildings visible from major roadways shall be finished to the same standards as other uses.

D. Fenestration

The arrangements of openings along a facade are an important element for consideration. Too many openings create visual clutter, while too few openings create large blank and uninteresting faces. The use of arches and lintels to define openings helps create a strong street edge and helps provide visual interest.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to provide ample windows and other openings along all facades of a structure that are open to pedestrian access or by which pedestrians may travel. At a minimum, windows and other openings shall be provided at the pedestrian level.

Entry doors shall be clearly defined with an increased level of detail. The use of awning and stepped entrances help to define pedestrian spaces and attract visitors. Storefront windows shall be raised above the sidewalk to display merchandise at eye level while acting as a visual “wainscoting” to the pedestrian space.

Fenestration details may be waived for industrial buildings if the impact on the roadways or adjacent properties is not significant.

E. Materials

Whenever possible, native and natural materials (wood, stone, brick) are encouraged in design. Excessively glaring or reflective materials, vertical or metal siding, exterior insulation finishing systems, T-111, stucco or other synthetic building products shall be avoided or only used in non-visible areas or at positions above the pedestrian level.

These materials shall imitate the character of traditional building products.

High quality faux finished or “historic reproduction” building products may be allowed.

F. Color

Large areas of uniform and unbroken color are discouraged. The use of cornices, trims, columns, pilasters and accent bands are encouraged to break-up large expanses of colors. Colors are encouraged to be sensitive to the surrounding architecture and natural environment. Excessively bright or vibrant colors shall be avoided. In general the use of earth tones (grays, beiges, tans) are encouraged for base colors. Accent and detail colors shall complement the base color while not overwhelming it.

G. Roofscape

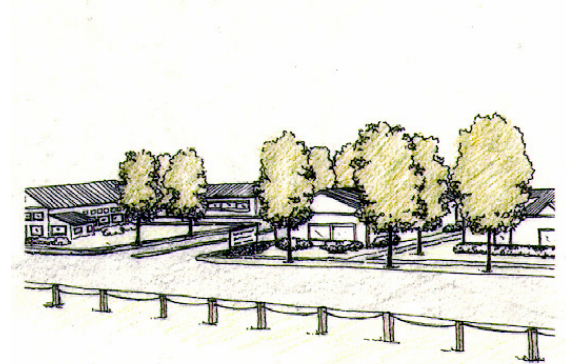
For commercial structures, the rooftop collection of mechanical units, telecommunications infrastructure and other similar devices, is a major visual element. These devices shall be screened from view by enclosures or through architectural elements so as to minimize visual impacts.

5.5 ACCESS

H. Access Points onto Major Roadways.

Access points onto major roadways shall avoid creation of Level of Service F unless there are extenuating circumstances. Additionally, access points shall be limited as follows (see Map 10):

1. I89 and US2 West - limited access highways; no additional access points are allowed.
2. Jasper Mine Road - Beauregard, Kelley and Prince may be served by individual access points; however, internal circulation shall be available to connect parcels with similar use types; no additional restrictions are suggested on Jasper Mine Road beyond normal highway access standards.
3. Niquette Bay Road - the most suitable access for Feeley appears to be at the very beginning of this road; design for this access must proceed carefully due to close proximity to the US 2 interchange.
4. US 2 between I89 and US7 - due to proximity to ramps, no access is recommended; if development occurs on either Bushey or Pecor parcels, access shall be via US7.
5. US 7 north of US2 (west side) - a single access already is planned for Brentwood Park and Stark/Allaire; one access shall be allowed for Quigley; the Mobil station shall be allowed to retain its current access.
6. US 7 north of US2 (east side) - one access point shall be allowed for VAOT aligning with Brentwood park. Two access points shall be allowed for Arbortech. Shared circulation may be desirable between the southern portion of Arbortech and Anderson.
7. US 2/7 intersection - a fourth leg to the existing intersection may be considered to serve Anderson and O'Brien. Due to likely congestion issues, a roundabout intersection should be analyzed.



Centralized Access RESULTS in SAFER VEHICULAR CIRCULATION and REDUCES PAVED SURFACES along a ROAD, MAKING a MORE INVITING ENVIRONMENT FOR PEDESTRIANS.

8. US 2/7 south of the intersection (west side) - the Texaco station shall be allowed to retain its southerly access; the northerly access shall be relocated a very short distance to the north and shall serve any additional development on Handy plus Pecor. Access points for Rubman shall be spaced at least 600' apart. If consistent with development plans, it is preferred that overall Rubman access be limited to two or three locations.
9. US 2/7 south of the intersection (east side) - the entire rear O'Brien acreage shall be served by one new access point onto US 2/7, either at the US2/7 intersection or at a suitable location on the O'Brien property. New development along the O'Brien US2/7 frontage is not recommended.

The Planning Commission may approve limited development on a parcel not exceeding 10% of the O'Brien US2/7 frontage if such development will have low traffic volume uses and will not detract from the scenic values of the US2/7 viewscape. At a minimum, buildings must be single-story and buildings and parking areas must be extensively landscaped.

I. Internal Access and Circulation

1. Internal vehicular circulation and connections to abutting properties shall be planned at the outset of all development plans. Comprehensive access plans are particularly important for large parcels such as Rubman, O'Brien and Feeley. Combined access shall be reviewed for such parcels as Anderson/Arbortech/O'Brien and Kelley/Beauregard/ Prince.
2. All non-residential development shall have primary access to a major roadway (US2, US7 and Jasper Mine Road) via a development road that does not pass by residential front yards.

J. Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation

1. Pedestrian circulation shall be planned at the outset of all development plans. Uses within each developments shall be connected by pedestrian walkways or multi-modal paths. Between areas separated by major roadways, the most likely pedestrian connections are across US7, particularly in the vicinity of the Commercial Overlay district.
2. Class 1 bicycle paths shall be provided along the entire length of US2 and US7 within the Exit 17 growth center. If all Class 1 standards cannot be met, the Planning Commission may consider modifications to Class 1 design standards. As part of development plans, bicycle paths may be relocated from US2 and US7 to a location within the development as long as connection points are provided at the ends of the development. Bicycle or multi-modal paths within a development and connecting to these through routes shall be planned at the outset of all development plans.

3. A walking path / bicycle path shall be provided to Malletts Bay State Park connecting it with other existing or planned pedestrian networks. This path shall be planned at the outset of development plans for any areas adjacent to the State Park.

6.0 IMPLEMENTATION

This growth center plan is put forth as the desired planning direction for the Exit 17 Growth Center Plan. The Planning Commission seeks to put the Use and Design Standards in place before further development occurs. Several steps are necessary for successful adoption of this plan.

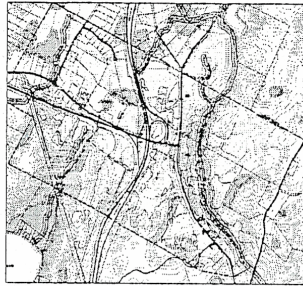
1. The Town of Colchester has begun the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan. The Exit 17 Growth Center Plan should be included as part of the updated Comprehensive Plan.
2. Amendments to the Zoning Ordinance must be prepared to implement the standards of this plan.
3. One of the most difficult tasks will continue to be extension of municipal sewer service to the Exit 17 area. This plan should be presented to the Town of Milton and to the State of Vermont to gain their support for the concepts expressed in this document and their assistance in extending sewer service.
4. Property owners also are being asked to support the concepts of this plan. For many properties, provision of municipal sewer is necessary to support the extent of development that is envisioned here. Those property owners in the proposed GD4 district who agree to the provisions of this plan shall be included in the Exit 17 area sewer district and the growth center.
5. The Town of Colchester should pursue permits for extension of municipal sewer service to the Exit 17 area. The costs of municipal sewer service should be paid by the users.
6. If municipal sewer service cannot be achieved in the near future, alternate wastewater disposal options should be pursued. The Town of Colchester should cooperate with Exit 17 Growth Center landowners to pursue alternate technologies or to find a location, inside or outside the growth center, for an extensive community wastewater disposal system.
7. The Exit 17 area does have some suitable on-site soils to support limited development. If municipal sewer service does not become available, the predominant type of use at Exit 17 is likely to be warehousing/limited manufacturing rather than residential. The proposed Use and Design Standards also should apply to this limited development option.
8. Other infrastructure needs also must be addressed, notably highway capacity. Some intersection and roadway improvements will be based on recommendations from the on-going Route 7 Corridor study. The costs of these improvements should be paid by outside funding sources or by users in the vicinity via impact fees, creation of a TIF district, etc.

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Town of Colchester, Vermont

EXIT 17 GROWTH CENTER PLAN



Prepared For:

Town of Colchester Planning Commission

Adopted by Colchester Select Board
August 22, 2000

Prepared By:



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